



GOLF CLUB STAFF – THE PLAYING OF GOLF

Ray Burniston looks at different aspects of staff activities.

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The situation constantly arises about what to do about members of the club staff being able to play the golf course and participate in competitions. With average subscriptions at clubs being anything from around £300 right up to the £1000 or more complaints may be received if staff are allowed to use the facilities without any payment. On the other hand if they are accepted as members then all sorts of problems could arise which would make it difficult to manage the club. Some years ago a Secretary asked my advice because the Head Greenkeeper was a paid up member and had just been elected to the Management Committee. This created a problem that no committee should ever allow to happen. So sensible guidelines should be drawn up and all staff and members know the situation.

The Secretary is invariably an Officer of the Club. Often the rules state that this person is an Honorary Member whilst they hold this office. In other words once they leave the post for any reason then they automatically lose their membership rights. Even with this rule situations can arise which can be a problem. Usually this only happens if the Secretary is a good competitive golfer and wins cups and trophies then the question of not paying any fees is mentioned by a certain type of member in the club. I always impress on newly appointed secretaries to obtain from the committee their status in the club. This should be obtained before they take the job and full details discussed at their interview.

There is no set pattern with clubs. Some will be pleased that the secretary is a good golfer and encourage them to play in matches and competitions whilst other clubs will frown on it. Hopefully at least the club will allow the secretary to play in some of the monthly medals and stablefords to maintain a handicap. There is good reason for allowing the secretary to play the course so that they see as a player rather than just from the greenkeeping angle.

For other staff members it is not so clear cut, and the rules and regulations will vary between different clubs. Allowing the green staff to play should under most circumstances be encouraged as again they will see the course in a different light and appreciate some of the points raised by the members. At some clubs during the summer months, they organise staff matches and competitions after work in the evenings. The committee is expected to play especially the Green Committee, which can be a good exercise in public relations. Other staff members such as the Steward and other clubhouse staff are often non-golfers but should they play golf then guidelines must be drawn up.

At some clubs there is a category for staff membership. They may pay a nominal subscription or none at all but have times when they can play the course. A small number of competitions are arranged and this enables them to have proper handicaps. This type of membership will exclude any voting rights and when they cease to be a member of the staff they would automatically lose their membership rights. It is also important that the staff must adhere to any local rules on dress or trolley restrictions and other items, the same as the members and visitors.

The final member of the staff is the Club Professional and usually his contract stipulates playing golf with members. As a professional he or she would not normally take part in club competitions although sometimes the professional will take part in holiday competitions which are non-qualifying. Most clubs will have a Captain & Professional Challenge and for this the Professional will usually play off scratch. This is not only a good exercise in the Captain meeting members but also for the Professional. Generally the club will encourage the Professional to play and the more members they play with the better.

The Club Committee or in the case of a Proprietary Club, the owners will determine what the policy of the Club is on this matter and ensure that all members of staff are aware so as to avoid any problems. In most cases staff should be able to play within the guidelines set down and any abuse of this should be promptly dealt with.

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